

Message Text

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TAGS: EG, IS, ,INR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 368 - JULY 28, 1977

MOSCOW, KUWAIT, SANA FOR A0BASSADORS

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

1. ISRAEL. BEGIN ANNOUNCED TO THE KNESSET YESTERDAY
THAT THE CABINET--AFTER A SESSION YESTERDAY MORNING--
HAD APPROVED THE DECISION BY THE MINISTERIAL SETTLEMENTS
COMMITTEE TO GIVE FULL LEGAL STATUS TO THREE UNAUTHORIZED
WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS--QADOUM (ELON MOREH), OFRA, AND

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MAALE ADUMIM. THE GOVERNMENT HAS AUTHORIZED THE
COMMITTEE TO DECIDE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SETTLE-
MENTS, HE ADDED. RESPONDING TO CRITICAL US STATEMENTS
ON THE MATTER, HE CHARGED THAT THEY HAD "NO JUSTIFICATION,
AND THAT HE HAD MADE ISRAEL'S POSITION ON WEST BANK
SETTLEMENTS CLEAR DURING HIS RECENT US VISIT.
HE TERMED SECRETARY VANCE'S REMARK THAT SUCH SETTLEMENTS

WERE CONTRARY TO INTERNATIONAL LAW AN "UNFOUNDED ACCUSATION." SUBSEQUENTLY, THE KNESSET IN EFFECT APPROVED BEGIN'S POLICY BY STRONGLY REJECTING A LEFT-WING PROPOSAL THAT ALL SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY BE HALTED.

2. THE GOVERNMENT'S STEP IS SIGNIFICANT IN SEVERAL RESPECTS:

--IT FOLLOWS SO CLOSELY BEGIN'S RETURN FROM WASHINGTON AND PRECEDES BY ONLY FOUR DAYS THE SECRETARY'S ARRIVAL IN THE MIDDLE EAST;

--IT UNDERSCORES HIS COMMITMENT TO WEST BANK SETTLEMENT ACTIVITY;

--IT LEGITIMIZES TWO SETTLEMENTS (QADOUM, OFRA) LOCATED IN THE HEARTLAND OF SAMARIA, WHICH IS DENSELY POPULATED BY ARABS;

--IT FOLLOWED BY ONLY ONE DAY THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT TWO SETTLEMENTS IN THE RAFAH APPROACHES AREA OF SINAI WOULD BE FORMALLY INAUGURATED;

--ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT, BEGIN MEANS TO TELEGRAPH HIS DETERMINATION NOT TO YIELD THE WEST BANK. BEGIN
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AND DAYAN DOUBTLESS WERE WELL AWARE OF THE IMPACT OF THIS MOVE ON THE ARABS AT THIS SENSITIVE TIME.

3. INTERNAL POLITICS ALSO PLAYED A MAJOR ROLE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION. BEGIN HAS BEEN UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE GUSH EMUNIM, THE NRP YOUTH AND ARIK SHARON, AMONG OTHERS, TO ESTABLISH SETTLEMENTS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA. DESPITE WEIZMANN'S ASSERTIONS IN RECENT WEEKS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE LIKUD CAN CONTROL THE GUSH, THE REALITY SEEMS OTHERWISE. THE SURVIVAL OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT DEPENDS ON THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE NRP. BEGIN IS CONSEQUENTLY SUBJECT TO THE SAME PRESSURES AS HIS PREDECESSOR, WITH THE GUSH PULLING THE NRP YOUTH FACTION, THE YOUTH PULLING THE NRP, AND THE NRP PULLING THE GOVERNMENT. SOME ISRAELI NEWSPAPERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE MOVE MAY HAVE BEEN A MANEUVER ON BEGIN'S PART TO STAVE OFF GUSH EMUNIM DEMANDS FOR EVEN MORE SETTLEMENTS.

4. THERE IS A FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE POSITIONS OF LIKUD AND LABOR ON THIS ISSUE. WHILE MOST IN

THE LABOR PARTY OPPOSED SETTLEMENTS IN HEAVILY POPULATED

AREAS OF SAMARIA, BEGIN AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE ALWAYS SUPPORTED THEM, SINCE RETENTION OF THE WEST BANK HAS BEEN BASIC TO BEGIN'S POLITICAL PROGRAM. MORE SETTLEMENTS--BOTH IN THE WEST BANK AND ELSEWHERE--THEREFORE WILL LIKELY BE IN THE CARDS. EVEN IF BEGIN WISHED TO HEAD OFF FURTHER GUSH EMUNIM DEMANDS FOR REASONS OF POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY, IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER HE COULD DO SO.

5. ALTHOUGH THERE HAS THUS FAR BEEN LITTLE ARAB REACTION TO THE ISRAELI ANNOUNCEMENT, WE EXPECT THAT MOST WILL STRONGLY DENOUNCE THE ISRAELI ACTION. EMBASSY CAIRO BELIEVES THAT OUR STATEMENTS THUS FAR ON THE MATTER WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO ASSUAGE THE EGYPTIANS; THEY WILL WANT SOME
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TANGIBLE ACTION FROM US TO UNDERScore OUR PUBLIC REMARKS, ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL ANNOUNCED DURING BEGIN'S VISIT. (CONFIDENTIAL)

6. EGYPT-LIBYA. THE SITUATION ALONG THE BORDER REMAINED CALM FOR THE THIRD DAY YESTERDAY. LIBYA FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGED ITS OBSERVANCE OF THE CEASEFIRE, AND SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN NOTED TOWARD THE ACCEPTANCE OF A "PEACE FORMULA" PROPOSED BY ARAB MEDIATORS. IN ADDITION, LIBYA APPEARS TO HAVE AGREED TO CONSIDER CERTAIN PEACE CONDITIONS DESIRED BY SADAT (A HALT TO ACTIVITIES AIMED AT JEOPARDIZING EGYPT'S INTERNAL SECURITY, INCLUDING AN END TO HOSTILE PROPAGANDA, THE DISMANTLING OF TERRORIST BASES, TERMINATION OF SUBVERSION, AND WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT FROM POLITICAL GROUPS IN EGYPT) WHICH IT HAD REJECTED EARLIER.

7. NONETHELESS, THE GOOD FAITH WITH WHICH BOTH SIDES ARE NEGOTIATING IS OPEN TO QUESTION. SADAT NO DOUBT BELIEVES THAT QADHAFI WILL NEVER CHANGE HIS WAYS AND THAT HE IS SIMPLY USING THE CEASEFIRE TO BUY TIME TO REGROUP AND STRENGTHEN HIS BATTERED FORCES IN THE EAST. QADHAFI IS EQUALLY SUSPICIOUS OF THE EGYPTIANS. HE PROBABLY WILL NOT LET LIBYA'S RECENT MILITARY SETBACKS INTERFERE WITH HIS POLICIES WITH RESPECT TO A MIDDLE EAST PEACE SETTLEMENT AND EGYPT AND HIS SUPPORT OF SUBVERSION AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. (SECRET)

8. LEBANON. DESPITE THE AGREEMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO ACCORDS AND THE SUPPOSED CEASEFIRE IN THE SOUTH, RIGHTIST AND PALESTINIAN FORCES REPORTEDLY CONTINUED TO TRADE ARTILLERY FIRE IN THE MARJAYOUN AND BINT JIBAYL

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AREAS YESTERDAY. AN ISRAELI NEWSPAPER SAID THAT RIGHTIST FORCES HAD ALSO ATTEMPTED TO CAPTURE THE PALESTINIAN-HELD TOWN OF KHIYAM ON TUESDAY, BUT HAD BEEN REPULSED. BEIRUT RADIO SAID THAT RIGHTIST AND PALESTINIAN FORCES IN THE SOUTH HAD BEGUN TO DISENGAGE YESTERDAY, BUT WE CANNOT CONFIRM THIS. MEANWHILE, ARAB DIPLOMATIC SOURCES IN BEIRUT ALLEGED THAT A NUMBER OF REJECTIONIST TROOPS--PERHAPS AS MANY AS 150--HAD LEFT LEBANON FOR LIBYA IN RESPONSE TO QADHAFI'S CALL FOR ARAB VOLUNTEERS TO CONFRONT EGYPT. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)
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